Discussion of Proposed New Handbook Chapter on Technical Assistance Visits
October 2013

Overview

This report discusses the potential addition of a chapter to the *Accreditation Handbook* that provides direction about Technical Assistance Visits for institutions newly approved to offer educator preparation programs. For the sake of congruity, the format of the proposed chapter will parallel that of Chapter 15: Accreditation Revisits (http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/accred-handbook/AH-Chapter-15.pdf).

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that a new chapter titled "Chapter 16: Technical Assistance Visits" be added to the *Accreditation Handbook* in order to further clarify when a technical assistance site visit is required, the focus of a technical assistance site visit, who participates, what preparations are required, and the possible outcomes of a technical assistance visit.

Background

The COA adopted the original version of the *Accreditation Handbook* in parts from January 2010 to June 2010. Revisions to the *Accreditation Handbook* were adopted in February 2012 http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2012-02/2012-02-item-16.pdf with the exception of language related to Denial of Accreditation which was further developed and adopted in June 2012 http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2012-06/2012-06-item-16.pdf.

Since the 2012 revisions to the *Accreditation Handbook*, it has come to the attention of staff that there is a need to provide institutions further information and guidance about Technical Assistance Visits. It is recommended that this information be included in the *Accreditation Handbook* as "Chapter 16: Technical Assistance Visits." The following language is the proposed content of this chapter:

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Technical Assistance Visit

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A Technical Assistance Visit is conducted at institutions newly approved to offer educator preparation programs. Once an institution is approved by the Commission and the COA has approved one or more educator preparation programs at that institution, the Commission assigns the institution to an accreditation cohort that is in its second year of the accreditation cycle.

The purpose of the Technical Assistance Site Visit is to: 1) provide formative feedback to the new sponsor regarding the implementation of the approved program(s) in relation to the program standard(s), 2) model the components of an accreditation site visit to prepare the institution for its upcoming site visit, and to 3) report to the COA on the progress of the newly approved program(s).

When is A Technical Assistance Visit Held?
Once an institution and its program(s) have gained initial accreditation, the institution will be assigned to one of the seven accreditation cohorts. Participation in all activities in the accreditation cycle, which takes seven years to complete, is essential for on-going accreditation. When an institution and its program(s) are assigned to an accreditation cohort, they enter the second year of the cycle. Two years following the approval of a new institution and its program(s), which is the fourth year of the accreditation cycle, the approved institution will participate in a Technical Assistance Site Visit rather than submitting a Program Assessment document. During the sixth year of the accreditation cycle, the approved institution takes part in an accreditation site visit. From that point forward, the institution participates in the normal cycle of Accreditation activities.

What is the Focus of the Technical Assistance Visit?
A Technical Assistance Visit focuses on the institution's implementation of both the Common and Program Standards and mirrors many of the activities of a traditional site visit. Using the narratives approved during the Initial Program Review, updated where appropriate, review team members review documentation, examine evidence and interview stakeholders regarding the unit's oversight and program's implementation of the approved program(s).

In other respects, the Technical Assistance Visit differs from a traditional site visit. The review team does not make standard findings decisions, and no accreditation recommendation is considered or mentioned. Instead, the review team writes a Technical Assistance Visit report that provides formative feedback to the institution about the adequacy of evidence and information provided that demonstrates the program(s) are addressing all required standards (both Common and Program Standards).

Who Participates in the Technical Assistance Visit?
During a Technical Assistance Site Visit, a review team consisting, at the minimum, of a Commission consultant and one educator examines the institution in relation to both the Common Standards and the appropriate Program Standards.

What Occurs During the Technical Assistance Visit?
Before the visit, the review team reads and analyzes the institution's Common Standards narrative and each Program Standards narrative, reviews supporting documentation and evidence provided by the team, and prepares interview questions for the stakeholders they will interview.

During the Technical Assistance visit, the review team interviews a representative sample of an institution/program sponsor's candidates, program completers, employers, field supervisors and faculty.

Evidence that is provided to the team includes at minimum,

- Approved Common Standards and Program Standards narratives updated with any changes since approval was granted
- Course syllabi for colleges/universities or course of study for Induction Programs

- Evaluation data (feedback that program completers, current candidates or other stakeholders have provided as part of program improvement efforts)
- Candidate performance data (information about candidates that informs program completion and improvement--items such as student teaching evaluation forms, key assessments, etc.)
- Any additional onsite documentation and evidence that is available

What is the Outcome of a Technical Assistance Visit?

At the conclusion of a Technical Assistance Site Visit, the team provides feedback to the institutional leadership via a Technical Assistance Visit report. This report includes information on every Common and Program Standard. The report includes information confirmed by the review team that shows how the institution is meeting each standard. The report will also contain information about those aspects of the standards where additional evidence is needed to demonstrate full compliance with the standard. This information is used to help guide the institution as to areas in which they must focus effort prior to the Accreditation Site Visit. The feedback is then used as supplemental information during the traditional Accreditation Visit that occurs two years later.

The Committee on Accreditation is provided with information on the technical assistance visit at the next regularly scheduled COA meeting.

In the Case of Egregious Issues

If the technical assistance review team finds that there are serious issues at an institution in the implementation, it should notify the Administrator of Accreditation. The Administrator of Accreditation may assign Commission consultants to work with the institution. In such a case, the Committee on Accreditation should be provided with information on the findings of the technical review and determine next steps for the institution and the accreditation process.

Next Steps

If the COA approves the Technical Assistance Visit language, a new Chapter 16 titled Technical Assistance Visits will be added to the *Accreditation Handbook* and will be posted to the Commission's webpage. It will be made available to institutions, team members, team leads, and staff to help guide the work of the accreditation system.